



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
OFFICE OF RADIATION AND INDOOR AIR
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November 30, 2010

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Radiochemical Results for
Smokey Mountain Smelter Samples

FROM: John Griggs, Director *John Griggs*
Center for Environmental Radioanalytical Laboratory Science

TO: Dave Andrews, OSC
Region 4

Attached are data packages for isotopic americium and thorium analysis of samples collected from the Smokey Mountain Smelter in Knoxville, TN. The samples constitute NAREL batch number 1000029.

Radiochemical analyses usually require the subtraction of an instrument background measurement from a gross sample measurement. Both values are positive, but when the sample activity is low, random variations in the two measurements can cause the gross value to be less than the background, resulting in a measured activity less than zero. Although negative activities have no physical significance, they do have statistical significance, as for example in the evaluation of trends or the comparison of two groups of samples.

For all analyses except gamma spectroscopy, it is the policy of NAREL to report results as generated, whether positive, negative, or zero, together with the 2-sigma measurement uncertainty and a sample-specific estimate of the minimum detectable concentration (MDC). The activity, uncertainty, and MDC are given in the same units. The activity and 2-sigma uncertainty for a radionuclide measured by gamma spectroscopy are reported only if the nuclide is detected; so, the results of gamma analyses are never zero or negative. Nuclides that are not detected do not appear in the report, with the exception of Ba-140, Co-60, Cs-137, I-131, K-40, Ra-226, and Ra-228. If one of these seven nuclides is undetected, NAREL reports it as Not Detected and provides a sample-specific estimate of the MDC.



Specific information concerning all aspects of the radiological analysis of the samples is contained in the batch case narratives of the data packages. If you have any questions concerning the analytical results, please contact me at (334)270-3450.

Attachments

cc: Jon Richards, w/o attachments
Ron Fraass, NAREL